

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 8, 9, and 11-18 were rejected. Claims 3, 10, and 19-21 were objected to. Claims 3, 10-16, 18 and 19 are amended. Claims 4-7 were previously withdrawn and are now canceled. Claims 1, 2, 8, and 9 are canceled. Claims 22-34 are added. No new matter is added. Support for new claims can be found throughout the specification and figures such as, for example, in figure 3 and pages 12, line 22 through page 13, line 10.

CLAIM REJECTIONS 35 U.S.C. § 102

Applicant does not concede that the references cited in the Office Action are prior art and reserves the option to antedate the references, such as for example by a signed affidavit under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131 showing invention prior to one or more of the references' critical reference dates.

Claims 1 and 8 were rejected under § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,961,919 issued to Douglass ("Douglass I"). Claims 1 and 8 have been canceled, rendering their rejections moot.

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Claim 2 was rejected under § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,886,092 issued to Douglass et al. ("Douglass II"). Claim 2 is canceled, rendering its rejection moot.

Claims 9, 11-16, and 18 were rejected under § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,826,674 issued to Sato ("Sato"). Claim 9 is canceled rendering its rejection moot. Claims 11-16 and 18 have either been amended to depend from claim 10, or else depend from a claim now amended to depend from claim 10. For reasons set forth below, Applicant submits that claim 10 is in a condition for allowance. For at least the same reasons, Applicant therefore submits that claims 11-16 and 18 are also in a condition for allowance.

CLAIM REJECTIONS 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 17 was rejected under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sato in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,781,408 issued to Langhammer ("Langhammer"). Applicant does not concede

that these references are prior art and reserves the option to antedate the references, such as for example by a signed affidavit under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131 showing invention prior to one or both of these references' critical reference dates. Claim 17 ultimately depends from claim 10. For reasons set forth below, Applicant submits that claim 10 is in a condition for allowance. For at least the same reasons, Applicant therefore submits that claim 17 is also in a condition for allowance.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Claims 3, 10, and 19-21 were objected to as being dependent upon a base claim, but the Office indicated that they would be allowable if amended to be in independent form including all elements of the base claims and any intervening claims. Claims 3 and 10 have been amended to incorporate all elements of claims 2 and 9, respectively. Accordingly, Applicant submits that claims 3 and 10 are in a condition for allowance.

Claims 19-21 depend from claim 10. For at least the same reasons, Applicant submits that these claims are also in a condition for allowance.

NEW CLAIMS

New claims 22-34 are added. Independent claim 22 contains generally-similar subject matter as claim 3. For the same reasons discussed above with regard to claim 3, Applicant submits that claim 22 – and claims 23-34 which depend from claim 22 – are in a condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Applicant submits that all pending claims are now in a condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions concerning the present paper, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at (206) 407-1542. If any fees are due in connection with filing this paper, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the Deposit Account of Schwabe, Williamson and Wyatt, P.C., No. 50-0393.

Respectfully submitted,
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